

Incident Command System: Roles and Flow Chart

Incident Command

➤ **What is the Incident Command System (ICS)?** - The Incident Command System was created by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the wake of the September 11 Terrorist Attacks in the U.S. First responders had different terminology when responding to the crisis, making it difficult to communicate with each other. When used appropriately, the Incident Command System helps responders speak the same language in a crisis.

➤ **Unified Command** - When multiple agencies respond to a crisis, it becomes a Unified Command. This may include the police department, the fire department, paramedics, the city, or other agencies.

Command Staff

➤ **Incident Commander (IC)** - The Incident Commander is the person in charge during a crisis. They establish objective, planning strategies, and implement tactics. This position is the only position that is always staffed in an ICS. Even small emergencies (such as a student injured on the playground) require an Incident Commander. The Incident Commander manages all functions on an ICS unless they delegate responsibilities to the Command Team. Sometimes the IC is the person with the most seniority, the first responder, the most training, or the highest rank in the crisis. The IC is responsible for ensuring safety in an incident and managing a crisis response.

The IC should have the authority to commit school resources, have past experience as incident responder, have ability to take command, balance response initiatives with safety concerns, motivate responders, communicate clear directions, size up the situation and make rapid decisions, assess the effectiveness of tactics or strategies, and be flexible and modify plans as necessary.

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- **Public Information Officer (PIO)** - Serves as the conduit for information to internal and external stakeholders, including the media or caregivers, according to the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Model. This person should have media relations training or experience, has the authority as designated spokesperson, and has the ability to maintain grace under fire.
- **Safety Officer** - Monitors safety conditions and develops measures for ensuring the safety of all response personnel. , according to the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Model. The Safety Officer should be experienced in worker safety and hazmat training or experience, and have the ability to assess risk and develop safety measures.
- **Liaison Officer** - Serves as the primary contact for supporting agencies assisting with incident response, according to the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Model. The Liaison Officer should have the ability to represent the concerns and needs of all parties involved in a response.
- **Mental Health Officer** - Has training as a school-employed mental health professional (e.g., school psychologist, counselor, social worker), and coordinates mental health support services for responders. This officer is given authority to determine that a given responder is unable to fulfill his or her responsibilities as a consequence of the responder's traumatic stress, according to the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Model. The Mental Health Officer should be licensed or certified as a school-employed mental health professional, and have the ability to assess the mental health status of incident responders.

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Command Staff

➤ **General Staff** - In a larger-scale incident, the Incident Commander may initiate the larger staff. This would include the:

- Operations Team
- Planning Team
- Logistics Team
- Finance and Administration Team

➤ **Operations Team** - This team should be led by the person with the greatest technical and tactical expertise in dealing with the problem at hand. In a Unified Command, only one Operations Section Chief is selected by the responding agencies, according to the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Model. The Operations Team Leader should develop and implement a strategy and tactics to achieve incident objectives, organize, assign, and supervise response resources, manage staging areas and special organizations, and organize mental health and medical support for crisis victims.

➤ **Planning Team** - This team should collect, evaluate, and display incident intelligence and information; prepare and document Incident Action Plans; track resources assigned to the incident, and maintain incident documentation, develop plans for demobilization, according to the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Model.

➤ **Logistics Team** - This team should order, obtain, maintain, and account for essential personnel, equipment, and supplies; provide communication planning and resources; set up food services; set up and maintain incident facilities; provide support transportation; and provide medical services to incident personnel/responders (not injured students), according to the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Model.

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➤ **Finance and Administration Team** - This team should negotiate contracts and monitor performance, perform timekeeping, conduct cost analysis, oversee compensation for injury or damage to property, and hold a critical position if the crisis incident qualifies as a federal or state emergency, according to the National Association of School Psychologists PREPaRE Model.



References

Brock, S.E., Nickerson, A.B., Reeves, M.A., Conolly, C.N., Jimerson, S. R., Pesce, R.C., & Lazzaro, B.R. (2016). *School crisis prevention & intervention (2nd Ed): The PREPaRE model*. Bethesda, MD. National Association of School Psychologists.